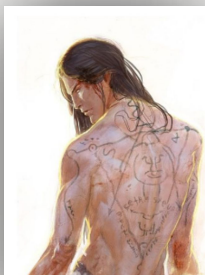




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# The Lord of Teeth



ephram

horror

teeth

192 21 11

## Chapter 1 by Brother Anteris

The air was stagnant, stale even, with the scent of corpses long since turned to dust in the small inner sanctum; grime and moss frosted the claustrophobic room, giving it an almost oppressive nature. Large stone bricks walled the room, it was smooth and sporting a tattered tapestry every so often; it was so far gone, the fabric was just molded and gray. At the center was a black marble altar, dull from its long years of disuse; even in the dark it still had a sheen to it, a very *hungry* sheen.

Two entered the inner sanctum, both were cloaked in heavy black fabric but only one was shrouded in a thick shadow; it wasn't that blackness was lingering around him, it was that he spewed it out like a faucet turned on full blast. He was the taller as well as the larger of the pair, his shoulders so broad he had to occasionally enter through doors sideways if it were too narrow.

"Ephram..." Said the smaller man, his voice snivelly and high and very excited. "...I can't believe you found it." He circled the small room with his hands clasped together, looking at the many unholy relics that was strewn about. "But we are not prepared... We do not have an offering for

the Old Ones." Slowly he made his way back to the center altar, careful not to disturb the dust that laid upon it.

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Silently he stood at the head, breathing in the dead that drifted in the lifeless air.

It was time.

Arduously he leaned over the dusty black marble slab and with a single long finger, he drew the lines and circles he needed, the action done in mere seconds. A blast of impossibly hot air blew out from the Black Altar, clearing the dust as well as removing the hood Ephram wore to reveal long raven black hair and a devilishly angular face. He looked like he could have been made of polished and chiseled stone.

“The carvings! Marvelous!” The small man was careful when he pressed his fingers against the jagged writings engraved along the edge of the altar.

Ephram moved to stand behind him, arms hanging at his side idly. “It says here Ephram, that an unconsenting sacrifice is to be used...” The small man paused removed his hood. “...His teeth must be... removed and placed upon the Altar.” He laughed nervously, his tongue flicking over his ivories. It was then had he realized that he was deceived by the very man he followed, confusion filled him for it was an honor that he was chosen yes, but he didn’t want this; which made the words he just read aloud, worse.

The acolyte shot off, evading the large hands that tried to seize his collar; he stumbled over the bones of those before realizing how many of them had broken jaws and absolutely no teeth. Fear threatened to choke him as he ascended the stairs, screaming and blubbering his want to live and that he would do anything for his lord, even offering his backside if that would appease him. Just as he reached the top of the last step with his hands, he was pulled back by his pant leg; a multitude of desperate hands clambered across his legs as his wailing intensified, there was no hope for him. Tears poured freely from his face as he fought the black force that was behind him, finding that all he was doing was leaving long bloody marks on the stone steps as well as leaving behind a few nails.

One. By. One, Ephram pulled each tooth from its socket. He found that the molars were the

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A quick and careful yank was all that was needed to give Ephram the space he needed to do his work; it took a grand total of 30 minutes to remove the teeth and to place them in the exact order they were in when they were in his disciple's maw.

Ephram chanted before the Black Altar with his garb at his ankle and a blood splattered smile on his face, whilst the dying acolyte sang his wheezing death rattle behind him; his own personal task was finished and the world would know it before the end.

## Chapter 2 by Harlander



Lucien, the acolyte, writhed feebly against the cold stone floor of the chamber. His jaw flapped senselessly as he moved, spilling fresh gouts of blood over his lips. His world had contracted to the constraints of his ruined body, a twisted shape bright with pain.

Ephram, the one he'd followed above all others, had betrayed him. Even now, he stood before the altar, arms raised. His powerful voice filled the chamber, and the flickering light traced the contours of his chiselled musculature. It was that statuesque body that had first drawn Lucien to him, but it was Ephram's rhetoric that had made him follow. Even now, when he should be filled with rage, it was hard to condemn Ephram's purity of vision, casting all aside in the pursuit of his goal.

If his jaw still worked, he might have laughed bitterly. "Father always said my desires would lead me astray," some strangely placid corner of his mind remarked.

This time, there was an answer.

"Your father was wrong," came the reply. The voice was unfamiliar. Cold, a sibilant whisper, like the wind through dead leaves. And another noise, a low but inescapable clicking, like the clattering of... teeth?

"Your desires will lead you to power you could never have dreamed of," the voice continued. "You are almost ready to take the final step."

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teeth. Those teeth had begun to glow, their sickly green light casting pale shadows around the chamber.

"Look at him," the whisper cajoled. "Steeped in your own blood, but he moves on without a care. And you, the one who stood beside him through it all, used up and cast aside like trash." The whisper rose to an angry snarl, and with it, the anger that Lucien had thought absent.

The clattering of teeth grew louder.

"One so false doesn't deserve the power I bring. He'd only serve his own ends, no matter what he says. I need someone who will be steadfast in my cause. Someone faithful."

The noise was overpowering now. Ephram turned from his work and regarded Lucien with a parody of a compassionate expression. "Not long now," he said.

"Not long indeed," the whisper cajoled. "It's time for you to make a choice. Die here and now, sacrificed to the ambitions of your 'friend' - or take up my mantle and claim the power to bend the world to your will."

Ephram raised his hand, fingers spread wide, to the ceiling.

"Choose!"

### Chapter 3 by Brother Invictus



With the echoing "Choose!" reverberating through Lucien's mind, the light left his eyes; his final fantasy played out, the agonies of life shucked so like his mortal coil.

Ephram finished his benediction to the altar, the teeth he so carefully placed upon its surface seem to pulse, the blackness of the marble infecting them. Consuming them. He cocked his head to the side, listening to words only he could hear; before nodding with a slow, sly smile. "As you wish, so shall it be done," he said with a deep, languid voice. He carefully picked his way back through the room, up into the cooling evening air. He had a date, and no intention of being late tonight.

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With a hurried air, he flagged  
before his unfortunate de

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Lucien had rented  
carefully left the keys in

the rental so that it might be stolen to further muddy the waters around his disappearance. That is, if anyone had the mind to ask after his little sacrificial lamb.

Ten minutes later Ephram hurried into the main foyer of an upscale sushi restaurant, looking for his date; patent leather shoes whispering across the bamboo flooring. A hand raised up catches his eye and he smiles warmly in acknowledgement; all of his previous darkness as far gone as his acolytes teeth. "Bradley!" he said with a throaty rumble, "How dashing you look tonight, and I am very much in love with this place already. How did you know I enjoy sushi?"he asked with as feigned playful innocence.

"Ephram!" Bradley said warmly, standing to clasp hands with Ephram before gesturing to the empty seat opposite him, joining him at the table as he continued, "If you must know, I did look over your FaceWall Page. You had a few pictures of sushi so..." he shrugged, " I guessed you probably liked it more than anything else. And don't say anything about stalking, I just wanted to get an advantage for tonight is all. I have been trying to get your attention for a while now as we both know, and any leg up for the first date should be welcomed." he finished with a white flash of teeth.

Ephram smiled back, enjoying the sound of his voice; like a smooth hot buttered rum, it went down well and warmed you up gently. As a banker, Bradley had fine taste in food and clothing, his suit and obvious reflection of the second in the way the cut fit him without straining over his well cared for figure. And from what Ephram had read up on the lounge they now occupied, this place was an exclusive but divine little sushi spot hidden away in the city. "...were you at earlier this evening?" Bradley asked.

"Sorry, You caught me daydreaming," covered Ephram smoothly. "You asked where I was before this?" he waits for Bradley to nod, "Oh I was out seeking more inspiration, you know how us artsy guys are." He said with a knowing grin and a chuckle while shaking his head. "Always looking for another flash of brilliance, or a Muse to help us along creatively," Ephram says with a smoky undertone to his voice, not looking at Bradley. "But enough about me, my only question is where are the menus?"

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"Oh? Well I'm not allergic to anything, so don't worry about that," Ephram said with a smile, " Be careful not to spoil me Bradley, I might get used to it!". Ephram had a feeling tonight was going to be a very pleasant one, all thoughts of his earlier activities lost with the name of his sacrifice. Lucas? Who cared, for now it was Bradley, food and wine; work could wait.

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